

Robert (Bob) McGuckin was Director of the Center for Economic Studies (CES) of the U.S. Census Bureau from 1986 to 1996. His contribution to the research and statistical communities via his direction of the CES are numerous. Bob clearly established the foundation principles that still drive CES's research programs. This foundation rests on the development of longitudinal micro-datasets of establishments and firms and on the idea that such data should be made available to the research community.

During Bob's tenure, CES developed and sponsored research on U.S. business dynamics that revolutionized the way economists and statisticians measure, analyze and think about the U.S. economy. Through this work, economists learned that the aggregate statistics measuring the U.S. business sector hid an incredibly dynamic underlying process. The entry and exit of firms and the pace of job creation and job destruction were much higher than the aggregate measures suggested. These "discovered" dynamics had important implications for the analysis of productivity growth, labor markets, firm investment decisions, the evolution of industries, etc. For example, through the studies from CES, economists developed a much deeper understanding of the producer dynamics that underlie U.S. productivity growth. The CES studies showed businesses are constantly reinventing and restructuring themselves and outputs and inputs are being reallocated away from less productive to more productive businesses. This process of creative destruction is central to the evolution of industry and aggregate productivity. Bob was clearly a pioneer in recognizing that to understand how the business side of the economy worked, one had to analyze the underlying business microdata and produce statistics to describe the dynamics. Clearly, Bob's view has won out as statistical agencies in the US and around the world now regularly produce data series on business dynamics. These insights from CES studies stimulated many other countries to develop longitudinal firm level datasets in a manner similar to those that developed under Bob's tenure at CES. The availability of these data has enabled an international community of researchers carry on and expand the work pioneered by Bob and others at CES.

The second fundamental principle that guided Bob during his tenure at CES was that the microdata on business and firms should be made accessible to the research community. Bob initiated and oversaw the development of the Census/NSF Research Data Center (RDC) network which is now a network of nine sites across the U.S. At the RDCs, researchers can access the proprietary firm-level datasets for approved research projects that provide new insights into the workings of the U.S. economy and improve Census data programs. Bob's focus on improving data access to the research community enabled numerous researchers to undertake projects at the RDCs and still is a guiding principle of the CES mission.